

# Help the U.S. Department of State Counter Fake News and Computational Propaganda



Project Title	Help the U.S. Department of State Counter Fake News and Computational Propaganda
Project Summary	This eIntern will be responsible for reviewing a select bibliography of cutting-edge scholarly work related to computational propaganda.
Country	United States
Agency	Department of State
DoS Office	IIP/PR/AN
Post	N/A
Section	N/A
Number of Interns	4

## Project Description

In recent news, much has been said about the dawning of a new “post-truth age.” This is an era in which falsehoods are more relevant than facts, and when disinformation and ground truth are often indistinguishable.

While disinformation itself is hardly new, its delivery has radically changed in the information age. Efficient and free, online social networks dramatically lower the barrier-to-entry for state and non-state actors seeking to influence foreign audiences at scale. Such efforts are driven by automated armies of bots, trolls, and hybridized “cyborg” accounts. These tactics are massively scalable, deniable, and far less costly than traditional advertising or outreach.

How do we counter this threat? In the past five years, scholars have published hundreds of articles focused on identifying and thwarting automated social media agents. The explosion of interest in this topic has yielded an embarrassment of riches - public diplomacy practitioners have more scholarly work at their disposal than they can reasonably digest. However, YOU can play a vital role in helping government analysts focus on the best, most relevant research.

This eIntern will be responsible for reviewing a select bibliography of scholarly work, summarizing its key findings, and drafting a shortlist of the most important publications. The corpus consists of scholarly works from 2012 to 2017, drawing on a fairly broad array of academic disciplines. We understand that some candidates may be more familiar with qualitative social science research than statistical analysis, and vice versa. Depending on the candidate’s strengths, the eIntern may focus on a specific subset of the literature.

This position reports is tasked to the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP). The work will consume roughly 10 hours per week, and include weekly check-ins with stakeholders from

IIP.

## Desired Skills Interests

## Additional Information

### Desired Skills and Interests

A successful applicant will have the following characteristics:

Strong interest in the problems posed by “fake news” and digital disinformation

Interest in public diplomacy and/or computational social science

A thorough understanding of the social media ecosystem - the applicant should understand how networks like Twitter and Facebook work, how information spreads online, and how state and non-state actors use social media

Data skills: the candidate should be familiar with basic data mining concepts, ideally with some experience processing large datasets for analysis

Familiarity with machine learning and statistical analysis

Language requirements

English

## Language Requirements

*None*